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ABSTRACT

To gain a perspective on the kinds of people who find newspapers and television to be high or low in credibility, a two-phase study combined demographic and other characteristics, media behavior, and attitudes toward the media. The first phase involved a series of focused group discussions, while the second was a national, representative sampling of adults aged 18 and older living in the United States. The quantitative phase of the project had two parts. First, telephone interviews, lasting 20 minutes on the average, were completed with adults. Then, during the second part, respondents were asked to complete a questionnaire mailed to them at home. Findings identified two groups of people as being especially critical of newspapers. One was a segment of the population with relatively higher education and income than other people surveyed, greater knowledge of news coverage, and greater propensity to act when angered by media content. They were disportionately Republican and conservative. The second group was a segment of the population with relatively low education and income, less knowledge of media, and less likelihood of taking action when provoked by media content. This group was particularly likely to be confused by newspaper policies on separation of fact and opinion and to have serious problems with media credibility. Detailed data analysis is provided in six appended tables. (HOD)

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MEDIA PUBLICS AND MEDIA TRUST

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MEDIA PUBLICS AND MEDIA TRUST

Much research has focused on the relative credibility, or believability, of media and factors underlying the concept of credibility, such as trustworthiness, fairness, and accuracy (e.g., Hovland, et al, 1953; Hovland and Weiss, 1951; Carter and Greenberg, 1965; Jacobson, 1969; Berlo, et al, 1969-70; Lemert, 1970; Lee, 1978). Kinds of people for whom the media are credible or not credible have been studied less often.[1] This research has concentrated mainly on demographic characteristics, political characteristics, and news seeking behavior.

The purpose of this paper is to present results of research which combines demographic and other characteristics, media behavior, and attitudes toward the media in order to provide a wider perspective on the kinds of people who find newspapers and television to be high or low in credibility.

Demographic Characteristics

One of the earliest surveys of media audiences showed that people for whom newspapers were more credible than other media tended to be male, urban, and of high socioeconomic status (SES), as measured by occupation, income, education, and objective and subjective social class (Westley and Severin, 1964).[2] People who placed highest trust in television, on the other hand, tended to be female, rural, and of low SES.

Carter and Greenberg (1965) found similar relationships between sex and education in their study of 500 adults in the San Jose, California, area.[3] In additional analysis of these data, Greenberg (1966) observed that sex was a better predictor of credibility attitudes in older people. The associa-

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tion between education and credibility was especially strong among people aged 40 and older, and it was stronger for men than for women.

More recent research (Lewis, 1981; Shaw, 1981) indicates that people with higher education may be more critical of the media with regard to "fairness" and may be more aware of the power of the media. This research also suggests that younger people may be less critical of the news media, but this may occur because they use the news media less.

The news media may have three "publics," defined by age, SES characteristics, and attitudes toward the media. Whitney (1984) described a public with negative attitudes toward the press and willingness to restrict First Amendment freedoms. Compared to the other publics, this public was relatively older, less well educated, less knowledgeable about how the media operate, and less interested in the news media, especially print. The second public tended to be younger, better educated, more knowledgeable about media, and more favorably disposed toward media. The third was an "elite" public with high education and income, high knowledge of the media, and high media use. This public was more likely than the second to be critical of media.

Political Characteristics

Westley and Severin (1964) found that independents and people with weak party identification trusted newspapers more than Democrats and Republicans (who were quite similar in their attitudes). People with lowest trust were apolitical (no party preference). Independents tended to be relatively high in trust.

Support for the President, party affiliation, and political ideology were related to people's attitudes toward the press with respect to the issue of Watergate (Becker, Cobbey, and Sobowale, 1978).

Political perspectives can also play a role in perceptions of credibility. In one small study, liberal and conservative respondents gave television news higher credibility ratings when they perceived TV news to be congruent with their own political perspectives (Zanna and Del Vecchio, 1973).

News-Seeking Behavior

People interested in news of controversy were more critical of the press than persons not interested in controversy, according to one early study (Anast, 1961). Other research suggested that people who sought news actively tended to find newspapers more credible than other media, and passive news seekers were less likely to choose newspapers as credible (Mulder, 1980).

The ASNE National Survey

The media credibility issue was explored by MORI Research (1985a, b, c) in a two-phase study sponsored by the American Society of Newspaper Editors. The first phase was a series of focus group discussions; the second was a national, representative sampling of adults aged 18 and older living in the contiguous United States.

METHODOLOGY

The quantitative phase of the project had two parts. First, a national, representative and projectable sample of adults was interviewed by telephone. Then, during the second part, respondents were asked to complete a questionnaire mailed to them at home.

The initial telephone sample was selected through random-digit dialing, a technique that allows unlisted numbers to be included. Up to four attempts were made to reach respondents determined to be eligible for the survey. All interviewing was conducted from central, monitored facilities.

Interviews, lasting 20 minutes on the average, were completed with 1,600 adults between December 7, 1984, and January 19, 1985. The statistical margin of error for a random sample of this size is plus or minus 3 percentage points. Error margins are larger for sub-groups.

During the initial telephone interviews, respondents were asked to give their names and addresses so a second questionnaire could be sent to them through the mail. Those who agreed received a 12-page questionnaire, a cover letter, and a $1 incentive. After about a week, these people were re-contacted by telephone so they could read back numbers corresponding to their answers on the mail questionnaire. Final telephone interviews were completed with 1,002 respondents during this second phase (December 14 to January 30). The completion rate was 58% of contacts with eligible respondents, and those taking part in the second phase were 63% of those completing the first part. The coefficient of inter-coder agreement for coding the open-ended questions is .94.

For the analysis, results were weighted by sex, education, household size, and race to match national figures from the U.S. Bureau of the Census. Results described in this paper are based on the weighted data, totalling 1,469 persons. Results for the second part are based on responses from the mail sub-sample, whose weighted total is 875 persons.

The mail sub-sample somewhat underrepresents people aged 18 to 24 and 65 or older, people with lower education and income, blacks, men, and widowed people. It slightly overrepresents people aged 25 to 44, those with higher education and income, women, married people, and those who read a newspaper yesterday. Based on a comparison of answers to the initial phone interview, there were essentially no differences between those who completed the mail questionnaire and those who did not as far as other media use characteristics, demographics, or attitudes toward news and the media were concerned.

DEFINING THE GROUPS WITH GREATEST MEDIA DISTRUST

Combining demographic characteristics and attitudes isolated two groups with serious and distinctive problems with the credibility of the media. They were called the "less well informed and suspicious" and the "sophisticated skeptics."

Here is how these groups were defined:

Attitudes Toward Media and the News

As a step toward identifying types of people among respondents who might be more likely than other groups to give newspapers low credibility scores, factor analyses were performed on a series of items measuring attitudes toward newspapers.

Respondents were asked if they agreed or disagreed with statements about the media and news--either strongly or somewhat--or if they felt neutral about them. Factor analysis indicated which of these statements tended to be related to each other. Attitudes measured by the statements divided into six factors or groups with a common theme: 1) media irresponsibility, 2) news involvement, 3) factual news interest, 4) attitudes toward opinion, 5) social alienation, and 6) skepticism about media facts. Table 1 shows percentages who strongly or somewhat agreed with each item and the amount of relationship of items as measured by a factor loading (the higher the loading, the greater the degree of relationship). The minus sign for the first item in Group 1 means that people who disagreed with this item tended to agree with the other items in Group 1.

Attitudes and Education

Respondents were given factor scores for each different category of attitude group, and each distribution of factor scores was divided into approximately equal thirds, "high," "medium," and "low." Crosstabulations

between attitudes toward the news media and education showed that education was related to where people stood on media irresponsibility, news involvement, and social alienation (Table 2).

The New Variables

Concepts were developed theoretically and statistically to locate segments of the audience with the most critical attitudes toward newspaper credibility, based on these results. During a qualitative phase, involving five focus groups conducted in different parts of the country prior to the survey, two particularly critical groups were hypothesized. They were termed the "sophisticated skeptics" and the "less well informed and suspicious."

If respondents were low or moderate in news involvement and also high in social alienation, they were identified as the "less well informed and suspicious." These people represented about 24% of respondents. A second group, "sophisticated skeptics," was defined as those who were high both in news involvement and high or medium in their scores on media irresponsibility. They represented 23% of the sample. Table 3 presents these definitions. The new variables were highly correlated with education, as shown in Table 4.

"Sophisticated Skeptics"

The "sophisticated skeptics" make up a group that is likely to exert influence beyond its numbers. Members of this group tended to have high education and income. They also included above-average numbers of conservatives and Republicans. They were more likely than others to say that their papers are "more conservative" or "more liberal" than they were, a few more saying "more liberal" than "more conservative." They were also more critical than

others of the reliability of newspaper and television coverage of President Reagan. Despite these characteristics, the "sophisticated skeptics" were more likely than others to fault the media for coverage that is too favorable to the wealthy and business people.

"Sophisticated skeptics" were knowledgeable and prone to act on their beliefs. They were highly likely to have personal knowledge of events or issues covered by newspapers, to say that they might take action if newspaper content angered them, and to reply that they had done so. They were slightly more likely than others to be critical of the fairness and accuracy of articles dealing with subjects they know about personally, as well as more likely to to say they know someone to contact at a newspaper if they have a problem or complaint. Overall, they were more critical than others of the quality of their newspapers' reporting and its coverage of controversy.

"Sophisticated skeptics" were highly interested in government and public affairs, compared with others. More than twice as many "sophisticated skeptics" said they followed this topic most of the time (64%), as did other people interviewed (31%). Compared with others, "sophisticated skeptics" were much more aware of controversial issues in their local areas.

As might be expected from these patterns, "sophisticated skeptics" had a strong interest in news. More of them had listened to radio news or local and national television news on the previous day, and more of them had cable television. They were also very oriented to print, preferring much more than the others to get their news from magazines or newspapers (52% to 33%). They were especially oriented toward newspapers (41% of "sophisticated skeptics" would feel lost without newspapers, compared with 19% of other respondents). In line with this, their readership of daily newspapers was

greater than others. About 72% of "sophisticated skeptics" read a daily newspaper almost every day, as contrasted with 55% of all other people surveyed.

"Sophisticated Skeptics" and Credibility

In spite of their high newspaper readership, "sophisticated skeptics" were more likely than others to score low on newspaper credibility (31% versus 23%). They were also especially likely to be low on television credibility (42% versus 23%).

If "sophisticated skeptics" got conflicting news stories from different media, they would be about as likely as others to believe newspapers (26% versus 24%). They would be twice as likely as others to believe magazines, and those who would believe magazines included almost as many as those who said newspapers (24%).

"Sophisticated skeptics" tended to say that local and state news is most reliable in newspapers, and they were more likely to say this than other respondents (45%, compared with 29%). But when the comparison is reliability for national and international news, "sophisticated skeptics" were not much more likely than other people interviewed to rely on newspapers. These patterns also held for answers to questions on which single source people would choose for local, state, national and international news.

Their loyalty to newspapers for local news showed also in replies to a question on which medium they would trust the most to help them understand a controversial local issue. About 68% said newspapers, compared with 50% of others. And, although less than one-third of the rest of the sample would trust newspapers the most to help them understand a national topic, 43% of "sophisticated skeptics" would.

"Sophisticated Skeptics" and Attitudes Toward the News Media

Despite their strong interest in newspapers, "sophisticated skeptics" were more critical than other people surveyed in many of their attitudes toward the news media. For example, almost all of the "sophisticated skeptics" (91%) said that most news reporters don't worry very much about hurting people, as compared with 74% of all others surveyed.

In addition, "sophisticated skeptics" were more likely than other respondents to agree that:

- There's so much bias in the news media that it's often difficult to sort out the facts.
- The news media emphasize bad news.
- If a newspaper endorses a candidate in an editorial, news reporting will not be fair to all candidates.
- The media give more space to coverage emphasizing their point of view.
- Advertisers in news media often get favored treatment in news coverage.
- News reporters do not try to be objective.
- The news media often are manipulated by powerful people.
- The news media usually try to cover up their mistakes.
- Most news media are not careful to separate fact from opinion.
- A person's right to a fair trial is more important than the public's right to know.
- The news media make people accused of crimes appear guilty before trial.
- Journalists' right to protect confidentiality of sources is less important than confidentiality is for doctors or members of the clergy.
- The news media abuse their constitutional guarantee of a free press.
- The personal biases of reporters often show in their news reports.
- Reporters often overdramatize the news.

"Sophisticated skeptics" also tended more than other people to say that they have hardly any confidence in the press (38%) or in newspapers (24%).

They were also more likely to give low ratings on honesty and ethical standards to newspaper reporters and TV reporters. Their evaluation of newspaper editors, however, was very much like other people's evaluations. They were less likely than others to hold TV anchors in high regard, but very few had poor opinions. They were less likely than others to agree with their newspaper's editorial views and to say publishing results of public opinion polls is a good way to inform people.

Areas of High Regard for the Press

Nevertheless, "sophisticated skeptics" were somewhat more likely than others (63% vs. 57%) to say that it is important to have a free press even when the press acts irresponsibly, and they were more supportive of investigative reporting. They tended more than others to disagree that the facts in newspapers are outdated by the time papers are delivered.

Table 5 illustrates how this group's attitudes compare with those of other people.

The "Less Well Informed and Suspicious"

The "less well informed and suspicious" also tended to be conservative and to be more critical than others of media coverage of President Reagan. This group tended to include the less educated, people with low incomes, people who don't identify with political labels such as "conservative" or "liberal," and to a lesser degree, blacks, women, and the elderly.

This group was relatively less knowledgeable. About 3 in 10 recalled a controversial news topic in their local area, although almost 5 in 10 of other people could do so. About 5 in 10 of the "less well informed and suspicious" had personal knowledge of a topic or issue that a newspaper had covered, while almost 8 in 10 other people had such knowledge. The "less well informed and suspicious" also were less likely to be motivated to

action by newspaper content. Only one-third said they might do something if aroused and just 6% said they ever had done something. They were less aware than others of someone to contact at a newspaper if they needed to and less aware of corrections columns in their daily papers.

The "less well informed and suspicious" also had comparatively lower interest in government and public affairs (21% versus 44% of others). They had a greater orientation to broadcast news and to television in particular. Almost half of the "less well informed and suspicious") could get along easily without newspapers, but only slightly more than one-fourth could get along easily without television news. Only 27% read newspapers for their main source of local news, compared with 41% of other respondents. This was true as well for state, national and international news. Their use of television for local news was similar to that of others, but their use of network TV news and radio news was lower, on the whole. They were almost as likely as others to have cable.

"The Less Well Informed and Suspicious" and Credibility

As their media behavior and news interest suggest, the "less well informed and suspicious" tended to score lower than average on newspaper credibility and higher than average on television credibility. They also tended to give their newspapers low ratings for reliable reporting, quality of reporting and coverage of controversial issues. Similarly, they were more than three times as likely as others to believe television if they received conflicting accounts of the news from various media.

Seven in 10 said that local and state news seems more reliable on television, compared with 5 in 10 of others). They were only about half as likely as others to say newspapers are more reliable for this

coverage (20% versus 36%). Their confidence in the reliability of TV for local news was high, and their confidence in TV for reliable reporting on national and international news was even greater (although their news interest was fairly low). They were especially likely to choose television to help them understand local and national news.

The "less well informed and suspicious" were similar to others, however, in confidence in newspapers, the press, and in television. Their greater interest in television showed in the higher evaluations they gave to television reporters. TV anchors were especially popular with this group. More than half rated them very highly.

The "Less Well Informed and Suspicious" and Media Attitudes

The "less well informed and suspicious" were more likely than other people surveyed to agree with the following statements:

- The press looks out mainly for powerful people.
- The amount of bias in the news makes it difficult to sort out the facts.
- If a reporter's byline is on a story, it is all right for the reporter to put his or her opinions into the story.
- The news media are often manipulated by powerful people.
- The government has the right to ask for files and notes of reporters, whether or not the information has been made public.
- The front page of their papers is more opinionated than the rest of the newspaper.
- The news media give more coverage to stories that support their own point of view than to those that don't.
- Newspapers are biased in favor of wealthy people and business people and are biased against senior citizens and "the average person."
- Newspapers and television are immoral.
- Newspaper content is frequently out of date.

Positive Views of the Media

The view that the "less well informed and suspicious" have of the news media and the press is not wholly negative, however. This group also was more likely than others to agree that:

- News reporters try to be as objective as they can.
- The news media try not to emphasize bad news too much.
- Newspapers which endorse political candidates will still try to be fair in news coverage.
- Reporters are trained to keep their personal biases out of their news reports.

The "less well informed and suspicious" were almost as likely as others to say that polls are a good way to inform people and that investigative reporting is important.

Table 6 shows some of the more striking comparisons of this groups' attitudes with those of others surveyed.

Summary

Two groups of people, defined by demographic characteristics and media attitudes, stood out in the ASNE survey as being especially critical of newspapers.

One is a segment of the population with relatively higher education and income than other people surveyed, greater knowledge of news coverage, and greater propensity to act when angered by media content. This group, the "sophisticated skeptics," was highly interested in news and newspapers but also highly critical of both newspapers and television. They were disportionately Republican and conservative. Other research has suggested the presence of this group among those most distrustful of media, such as an "elite public" (Whitney, 1984), people with greater interest in controversial news topics (Anast, 1961), "active news seekers" (Mulder,

1980), and a low credibility, high media use group described in early research (Westley and Severin, 1964).

A second group is a segment of the population with relatively low education and income, less knowledge of media, and less likelihood of taking action when provoked by media content. This group, also defined by a combination of demographic and attitude items and termed "the less well informed and suspicious," was particularly likely to be confused by newspaper policies on separation of fact and opinion and to have serious problems with media credibility. This group is much like Whitney's (1984) "critical, non-supportive public" and Mulder's (1980) "passive news seekers."

Future research on these two groups might provide insight into how their numbers might be reduced. "Sophisticated skeptics" seem important to study because they may be influential beyond their numbers. It may be useful to study the "less well informed and suspicious" in the context of increased social disparities. Some research suggests that divisions between the haves and have-nots of society will increase (Gaziano, 1983).

Both groups should be viewed in the context of a changing society which is becoming more educated and sophisticated, more urban, and more dependent on an information-based, rather than an industrial-based, economy. The mass media have showed phenomenal growth in numbers and types, and media geared to highly specialized audiences (who often have high SES) have mushroomed. Attitudes and values have undergone considerable change in the last few decades and are likely to undergo more change as society becomes more complex.

Some characteristics of the "sophisticated skeptics" and the "less well-informed and suspicious" have been examined in three decades of media research. Other characteristics have not been described by previous research. Since there is evidence that people may be increasingly critical

and distrustful of media (Fry, 1985; Gergen, 1984), these two groups are worthwhile to study further.

Diminished credibility of the news media is important to study also because people's opinions on First Amendment rights and privileges are related to their perceptions of media credibility (MORI Research, 1985b, c). A substantial minority, about four people in ten surveyed, desired curbs on First Amendment freedoms. Credibility also appears to play a role in the news sources that people choose as well.

NOTES

1. MORI Research, Inc., has compiled an annotated bibliography of media credibility research, which is included in the technical appendix for "Newspaper Credibility: Building Reader Trust," a survey sponsored by the American Society of Newspaper Editors.

2. Westley and Severin measured "credibility" by the following question: "As between television, radio and the newspapers, which one do you feel gives the most accurate and truthful news?"

3. Carter and Greenberg defined credibility with two questions. One was a question used by the Roper polling organization for the Television Information Office: "If you got conflicting or different reports of the same news story from radio, television, the magazines, and the newspapers, which of the four versions would you be most inclined to believe--the one on radio or television or magazines or newspapers?" They compared results for this question with results for their own question: "We would like your opinion on the reliability of (name of medium) for news. If perfect reliability is 100 percent, in your opinion, what percentage of the news on (name of medium) do you believe (from 0-100%)."

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Kristin McGrath, president of MORI Research, headed the research and coordinated planning with the ASNE Credibility Committee, of which David Lawrence, Jr., was chairman. Cecilie Gaziano, research analyst, was project director of the national survey. Virginia Dodge Fielder, director of news and circulation research for Knight-Ridder Newspapers, contributed ideas for report organization and writing.

Sharon Polansky, doctoral student at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, and Paula Hartmann, of MORI Research, helped develop codes for open-ended questions and did coding. Other coders were Karen McKeon and James Jeffery at MORI Research. Brent Stahl, research analyst, Lee Kaplan, account executive, and Arline Satrom, research assistant, all MORI staffers, made conceptual and technical contributions to project planning and report preparation. Ronald E. Anderson, professor of sociology and director of the Minnesota Center for Social Research, University of Minnesota, provided statistical consulting.

Jeanne Drew Surveys, Inc., conducted the interviewing, and C. J. Olson Market Research,Inc., also conducted some interviewing.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Copies of a published summary of the focus group and national survey research, Newspaper Credibility: Building Reader Trust, are available at $6.50 from the American Society of Newspaper Editors, P.O. Box 17004, Washington, D.C. 20041 (phone 703-620-6087). There is a 20 percent discount for orders of 20 or more copies. Make checks payable to ASNE. Copies of this technical report and a focus group report also are available from ASNE.

The data tapes for the study have been deposited with the Roper Center at the University of Connecticut. Inquiries may be addressed to the Center at Box U164, University of Connecticut, Storrs, CN 06268. Telephone (203) 486-4441.

An annotated bibliography on media credibility is included in MORI Research (1985c).

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TABLE 1: ATTITUDES TOWARD MEDIA AND THE NEWS

Subsample: Those who completed Part 2 interview. (N = 875)

Group 1: MEDIA IRRESPONSIBLITY	Factor Loading	% Who Agree with Item
News reporters usually try to be as objective as they possibly can be.	-.53	63%
Reporters frequently overdramatize the news.	.61	68%
The news media put too much emphasis on what's wrong with America and not enough on what is right.	.58	63%
The news media often make people accused of crimes look guilty before they are tried in court.	.63	71%
The news media give more coverage to stories that support their own point of view than to those that don't.	.74	51%
The press often takes advantage of victims of circumstance who are ordinary people.	.57	63%
Group 2: LOW NEWS INVOLVEMENT		
It takes a lot of patience for me to sit down and read very much.	.63	30%
I'm not particularly interested in politics and world affairs because they don't affect me personally.	.68	18%
I think that people can be adequately informed just by watching the news on TV.	.55	40%
I'm just too busy with other things to keep up with what's happening in the news.	.70	23%
I'd like to keep up better with what's happening in the world, but it's just too complicated and confusing.	.48	41%
The news media try not to emphasize bad news too much.	.34	22%
Group 3: FACTUAL NEWS INTEREST		
News reports should stick to the facts rather than containing a lot of interpretation.	.68	87%
It is very important to me personally to keep up with what is happening in the news.	.73	77%

(Table is continued on the next page.)

(Table continued.)

Group 4: ATTITUDES TOWARD OPINION	Factor Loading	% Who Agree with Item
When a reporter's "byline" is put on a story, the reporter is entitled to put his or her opinions in the story.	.64	38%
If a newspaper endorses a candidate in an editorial, the news coverage will still be fair to all candidates.	.49	34%
People who write columns in newspapers are entitled to include their opinions in their columns.	.71	62%
Group 5: SOCIAL ALIENATION		
Most people in public office are not really interested in the problems of the average person.	.68	59%
Everything is changing too fast these days.	.63	58%
Most people don't care what happens to the next person.	.71	46%
Group 6: SKEPTICISM ABOUT MEDIA FACTS		
It's up to individuals to sort out all the biases in the news media and to find out the truth for themselves.	.60	50%
A lot of the facts in newspapers are out of date by the time people receive the newspaper.	.65	35%

(Note: Some of these items were somewhat related also to items in other groups. Only those with highest relationship are shown.)

TABLE 2: ATTITUDES AND LEVEL OF EDUCATION

Subsample: Those who completed Part 2 interview. (N = 875)

MEDIA IRRESPONSIBILITY	Less Than High School	High School Degree	Some College or More
Low belief that media are irresponsible	43%	34%	28%
Medium belief that medium are irresponsible	28	34	36
High belief that media are irresponsible	30	33	36
NEWS INVOLVEMENT			
Low news involvement	53%	35%	19%
Medium news involvement	29	35	34
High news involvement	18	30	47
SOCIAL ALIENATION			
Low social alienation	21%	29%	46%
Medium social alienation	29	37	32
High social alienation	50	33	23

TABLE 3: HYPOTHESIZED GROUPS

Group	Scale	Scores
"Sophisticated Skeptics"	News Involvement	High
	Media Irresponsiblity	High or Medium
"Less Well Informed and Suspicious"	News Involvement	Medium or Low
	Social Alienation	High

TABLE 4: NEW VARIABLES AND LEVEL OF EDUCATION

Subsample: Those who completed Part 2 interview.

	"SOPHISTICATED SKEPTICS" (N = 191)	ALL OTHER RESPONDENTS (N = 648)
Less than high school	10%*	27%
High school degree	34	42
Some college or more	56	31

	"LESS WELL INFORMED" (N = 202)	ALL OTHER RESPONDENTS (N = 637)
Less than high school	37%**	19%
High school degree	44	39
Some college or more	19	42

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*$\underline{X}^2$ = 44.131, DF = 2, Cramer's $\underline{V}$ = .23, p = .0001 (N = 839).

**$\underline{X}^2$ = 45.487, DF = 2, Cramer's $\underline{V}$ = .23, p = .0001 (N = 839).

TABLE 5: ATTITUDES OF THE "SOPHISTICATED SKEPTICS"*

Subsample: Those who completed Part 2 questionnaires.

A. Which of the following statements comes the closest to how you personally feel?	"SOPHISTICATED SKEPTICS" (N = 191)	ALL OTHER RESPONDENTS (N = 648)
1. Most news reporters are just concerned about getting a good story, and they don't worry very much about hurting people.	91%	74%
OR		
Most news reporters worry about how their stories may hurt people.	9%	26%
2. Reporters are trained to keep their personal biases out of their news reports.	28%	52%
OR		
The personal biases of reporters often show in their news reports.	72%	48%
3. People who advertise in the news media often get favored treatment in news coverage.	45%	36%
OR		
News coverage in the news media generally is not influenced by advertisers.	55%	64%
4. The news media often are manipulated by powerful people.	48%	32%
OR		
The news media are pretty independent despite the efforts of special interest groups to manipulate them.	52%	68%
5. The media abuse their constitutional guarantee of a free press.	53%	34%
OR		
The media are usually careful to be responsible.	47%	66%
6. Most news media are careful to separate fact from opinion.	39%	64%
OR		
Most news media don't do a very good job of letting people know what is fact and what is opinion.	61%	36%

*All differences are significant at the .0001 level except for No. 3 with p = .02 Based on chi square analyses.

(Table continued on the next page)

Table 5, continued: Attitudes of the "Sophisticated Skeptics"

B. Please mark how much you agree or disagree with the following statement. (Strongly agree and somewhat agree combined)*	"SOPHISTICATED SKEPTICS" (N = 191)	ALL OTHER RESPONDENTS (N = 648)
News reporters usually try to be as objective as they possibly can be. AGREE:	48%	67%
The news media try not to emphasize bad news too much. AGREE:	8%	25%
If a newspaper endorses a candidate in an editorial, the news coverage will still be fair to all candidates. AGREE:	26%	37%
Reporters frequently overdramatize the news. AGREE:	85%	63%
The news media often make people accused of crimes look guilty before they are tried in court. AGREE:	86%	66%
The news media give more coverage to stories that support their own point of view than to those that don't. AGREE:	70%	44%

C. Overall, does local and state news seem more reliable to you when you see it on television, read it in a newspaper, hear it over the radio, or read it in a magazine?		
More reliable on TV	36%	62%
More reliable in newspapers	45	29
More reliable on radio	13	5
More reliable in magazines	6	4

Overall, does national and international news seem more reliable to you when you see it on television, read it in a newspaper, hear it over the radio, or read it in a magazine?		
More reliable on TV	55%	71%
More reliable in newspapers	24	18
More reliable on radio	6	3
More reliable in magazines	15	8

D. About how often do you read (most familiar newspaper)?		
Almost every day	72%	55%
3-4 times a week	11	11
1-2 times a week	12	24
Less than once a week	6	10

*All differences are significant at the .0001 level, based on chi square analyses.

TABLE 6: ATTITUDES OF THE "LESS WELL INFORMED AND SUSPICIOUS"*

Subsample: Those who completed Part 2 questionnaires.

	"LESS WELL INFORMED" (N = 202)	ALL OTHER RESPONDENTS (N = 637)
A. Which of the following statements comes the closest to how you personally feel?		
1. The press looks out for ordinary people.	41%	59%
OR		
The press looks out mainly for powerful people.	59%	41%
2. A reporter has a right to refuse to give the government information he or she has obtained but which has not been made public.	54%	69%
OR		
If the government feels it needs such information, it has a right to demand access to all of the files and notes of a reporter, whether the information has been made public or not.	46%	31%
3. The news media often are manipulated by powerful people.	41%	34%
OR		
The news media are pretty independent despite the efforts of special interest groups to manipulate them.	59%	66%
4. Although there is some bias in the news media, the average person has enough sources of news to be able to sort out the facts.	59%	66%
OR		
There's so much bias in the news media that it's often difficult to sort out the facts.	41%	34%
B. Overall, how would you rate the <u>reliability</u> of the daily newspaper you are the most familiar with?		
Those who rate it as very reliable (4 or 5 on a 5-point scale).	55%	67%

*All differences are significant at the .02 level or better, based on chi square analyses, except for No. 4, for which p = .08 and No. 3, p = .06.

(Table is continued on the next page.)

Table, continued: Attitudes of the "Less Well Informed and Suspicious"

	"LESS WELL INFORMED" (N = 202)	ALL OTHER RESPONDENTS (N = 637)
C. Please mark how much you agree or disagree with the following statement. (Strongly agree and somewhat agree combined)*		
When a reporter's "byline" is put on a story, the reporter is entitled to put his or her opinions in the story. AGREE:	44%	36%
A lot of the facts in newspapers are out of date by the time people receive the paper. AGREE:	49%	30%
The news media give more coverage to stories that support their own point of view than to those that don't. AGREE:	56%	48%
D. Overall, does local and state news seem more reliable to you when you see it on television, read it in a newspaper, hear it over the radio, or read it in a magazine?		
More reliable on TV	71%	52%
More reliable in newspapers	20	36
More reliable on radio	6	7
More reliable in magazines	3	4
Overall, does national and international news seem more reliable to you when you see it on television, read it in a newspaper, hear it over the radio, or read it in a magazine?		
More reliable on TV	81%	63%
More reliable in newspapers	12	21
More reliable on radio	4	4
More reliable in magazines	3	12
E. About how often do you read (most familiar newspaper)?		
Almost every day	48%	62%
3-4 times a week	12	11
1-2 times a week	26	19
Less than once a week	15	7
F. Those rating honesty and ethical standards of people in occupational categories as "high""		
TV news anchormen and anchorwomen	53%	40%

*All differences are significant at the .02 level or better, based on chi square analyses.